

a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONDURAS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to speak briefly about the recent decision by the National Jurisdiction Sentencing Court in Honduras to acquit Honduran nationals Edwin Espinal and Raul Alvarez. Both men were found to have been falsely accused of aggravated property damage, aggravated arson, and the use of homemade explosives, charges for which it turned out the government had no credible evidence.

Espinal and Alvarez spent 19 months in a maximum-security prison awaiting trial. They were reportedly subjected to harsh conditions, including receiving only 2 hours of sunlight per month. Despite being accused of common crimes, special courts created to try members of organized criminal networks presided over the process, including a judge located at a military base. It took 4 years for a court to rule on their case and to finally absolve them of charges that were determined to be without merit.

Espinal and Alvarez, like dozens of other protesters, were arrested during the 2017 electoral turmoil that culminated in the reelection of current President Juan Orlando Hernandez. Their case was used as a means to silence protesters and stifle discussion of the democratic process and the need for transparent elections.

Edwin Espinal is a human rights defender who has faced political persecution since 2009. He is not alone. Many human rights and environmental defenders, as well as independent journalists in Honduras, have suffered threats, arbitrary arrests, beatings, and assassinations by Honduran police or others acting on their behalf.

I and others here have repeatedly voiced our concerns with the Honduran Government's misuse of the judicial process to silence dissent. Bringing charges with no credible evidence and holding social activists and other critics in prison and subjecting them to lengthy criminal processes undermines due process and erodes public confidence in the integrity of the police and the courts.

I am also concerned with the lack of due process in the case of the eight imprisoned water defenders from Guapinol that has dragged on for years. And like many, I am waiting for the official sentencing hearing of Roberto David Castillo, the convicted coauthor of the murder of Honduran environmentalist and indigenous activist, Berta Cceres.

With another election just around the corner in Honduras, I urge the Honduran Government to support a free and fair electoral process, as well as freedom of expression, association, and

assembly for all Honduran citizens. And I hope that the Honduras' next leaders will reject the corrupt practices and impunity of the past and support an independent judiciary, uphold the rule of law, hold the police and other public officials accountable when they abuse their authority, and restore the faith of the Honduran people in government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

TRIBUTE TO ELLE PURRIER ST. PIERRE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, it was with great pride that Americans across the country tuned in this summer for the return of the Olympic Games. I want to take a moment to celebrate the achievements of one Vermonter who traveled to Tokyo, Japan, to represent our Nation—and our State—in these celebrated games. Elle Purrier St. Pierre represented the United States in the 1500-meter run at the 2020 Olympic Games. This was Elle's first turn as an Olympian, and she certainly made her mark, qualifying for the final in the 1500-meter, in which she crossed the line in 10th place.

Elle is a Vermonter in the truest sense of the word. She grew up working on her family's dairy farm in Montgomery Center, a town of less than 800 people along the Canadian border. During her freshman year of high school, she stumbled onto the Richford High School track team, initially skeptical of long-distance running. Nonetheless, her raw talent and grit quickly became clear, and she went on to become one of the most decorated high school runners in State history.

In college, she ran for the University of New Hampshire, where she garnered 11 NCAA Division One All-American titles and a championship victory in the indoor mile her senior year. Upon graduation in 2018, Elle signed with New Balance to run professionally. Although she has only run professionally for 3 years, she has set new national records in the indoor 1-mile and 2-mile distances.

In June, Elle won the 1500-meter at the U.S. Olympic Trials, breaking the Olympic Trial record and securing her spot on the U.S. Olympic team in the process. Elle sailed through the qualifying rounds of the 1500, made it through to the finals where she competed against the strongest and fastest runners in the world. While her friends and family could not join her in Tokyo, they and so many others gathered in the Richford High School cafeteria in the early hours of the morning to watch each of her races live.

Even as her success as a professional runner has taken her across the globe, her Vermont roots remain strong. Elle still considers Montgomery Center her home, where she lives with her husband, Jamie, who is also a dairy farmer. On September 25, Elle was celebrated at a welcome home parade through the town of Richford. Throngs

of fans cheered her on as she took her well-deserved victory lap.

It is hard to overstate how proud we Vermonters are of Elle. She is only the second Vermonter to compete in the Olympics for track and field. At only 26, I am sure we will see more from Elle in the future. I am very excited how Elle continues to perform in the years to come.

I ask unanimous consent that the article "Welcome Home, Elle! Richford Community Hosts Parade in Honor of Home-Town Olympian Elle Purrier St. Pierre," published in the St. Albans Messenger, be printed in the RECORD.

WELCOME HOME ELLE! RICHFORD COMMUNITY HOSTS PARADE IN HONOR OF HOME-TOWN OLYMPIAN ELLE PURRIER ST. PIERRE

(By Ruthie LaRoche)

On Saturday, Sept. 25, Elle Purrier St. Pierre walked beneath the American Flag, hoisted high on the Richford Volunteer Fire Department's ladder truck as part of a Welcome Home parade held in her honor.

This August, Purrier St. Pierre represented the United States of America, racing in the women's 1500 meter at the 2021 Olympic Games in Tokyo, Japan.

Purrier St. Pierre walked just steps behind a white and red heifer draped in the Stars and Stripes, the community she represented with pride, cheering and waving as she passed.

A little while later, Purrier St. Pierre stood on a podium, the crowd of parade-goers now encircling her, listening in rapt attention as she spoke of her journey to the Olympic stage.

Many knew her story well, but I'm sure there were portions very few knew, and it was the unknown story that made the community support so much more special.

"Representing the United States of America on the Olympic and world stage has been one of the highest honors of my life so far," said Purrier St. Pierre.

"Competing at the Olympics is the epitome of sports, and wearing those three letters (USA) across my chest was one of the best feelings I've ever had."

PURRIER ST. PIERRE SPOKE OF HER TIME IN TOKYO AND THE THOUGHTS OF HOME THAT BUOYED HER UP FROM HALF A WORLD AWAY

"These Olympic Games were different than most, but they were still astounding and historic. I tried to embrace the challenges brought on by the pandemic but found myself feeling very isolated throughout the experience," said Purrier St. Pierre.

"I spent many days alone since no friends or family members were allowed to travel to Tokyo. I was trying to mentally and physically prepare to compete against runners who were the best in the world."

PURRIER ST. PIERRE WAS PREPARING TO COMPETE IN THE MOST SIGNIFICANT RACE OF HER CAREER

"I knew I had prepared well for many years, but I'd be lying if I didn't say it wasn't extremely daunting. Something that helped me regain my courage was remembering the great country, state, and community I was representing," said Purrier St. Pierre.

"I was thousands of miles away, but I felt the love from this place and all of you. That love and support helped me persevere through the games."

ON THE TEAM BUS IN TOKYO, PURRIER ST. PIERRE RECEIVED A MESSAGE FROM HOME THAT BROUGHT TEARS TO HER EYES

"I was on my way to the track to make my Olympic debut; I opened my phone and saw a